

RICHARD E. NEAL
MASSACHUSETTS,
CHAIRMAN

Congress of the United States

U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

1102 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

(202) 225-3625

Washington, D.C 20515-0348

<http://waysandmeans.house.gov>

KEVIN BRADY
TEXAS,
RANKING MEMBER

JOHN LEWIS, GEORGIA
LLOYD DOGGETT, TEXAS
MIKE THOMPSON, CALIFORNIA
JOHN B. LARSON, CONNECTICUT
EARL BLUMENAUER, OREGON
RON KIND, WISCONSIN
BILL PASCRELL JR., NEW JERSEY
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS
LINDA T. SANCHEZ, CALIFORNIA
BRIAN HIGGINS, NEW YORK
TERRI A. SEWELL, ALABAMA
SUZAN DELBENE, WASHINGTON
JUDY CHU, CALIFORNIA
GWEN MOORE, WISCONSIN
DAN KILDEE, MICHIGAN
BRENDAN BOYLE, PENNSYLVANIA
DON BEYER, VIRGINIA
DWIGHT EVANS, PENNSYLVANIA
BRAD SCHNEIDER, ILLINOIS
TOM SUOZZI, NEW YORK
JIMMY PANETTA, CALIFORNIA
STEPHANIE MURPHY, FLORIDA
JIMMY GOMEZ, CALIFORNIA
STEVEN HORSFORD, NEVADA

DEVIN NUNES, CALIFORNIA
VERN BUCHANAN, FLORIDA
ADRIAN SMITH, NEBRASKA
KENNY MARCHANT, TEXAS
TOM REED, NEW YORK
MIKE KELLY, PENNSYLVANIA
GEORGE HOLDING, NORTH CAROLINA
JASON SMITH, MISSOURI
TOM RICE, SOUTH CAROLINA
DAVID SCHWEIKERT, ARIZONA
JACKIE WALORSKI, INDIANA
DARIN LAHOOD, ILLINOIS
BRAD R. WENSTRUP, OHIO
JODEY ARRINGTON, TEXAS
DREW FERGUSON, GEORGIA
RON ESTES, KANSAS

GARY ANDRES,
MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

BRANDON CASEY,
MAJORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

June 18, 2020

Dr. Philip Swagel
Director
Congressional Budget Office
441 D Street SW
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Director Swagel:

Driven by the necessary public health response to a global pandemic, the United States is experiencing the highest unemployment since the Great Depression. In March, Congress responded to the pandemic by enacting Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), a supplemental unemployment benefit intended to provide the average unemployed worker with full wage replacement, in order to support compliance with stay-at-home orders for workers and school closings for their children, flatten the curve of the pandemic, and prevent economic devastation for individuals, families, and the country as a whole. Those benefits are particularly vital for communities of color, where long-standing inequities have resulted in lower wages, higher unemployment rates, and now, a substantially higher risk of contracting and dying from COVID-19.

Despite the challenges workers have faced in accessing their benefits via antiquated and deeply flawed state unemployment insurance systems, the FPUC has been a lifeline for workers and communities. For example, rates of rent payments and mortgage defaults are essentially unchanged since the pandemic began, and economists estimate that the FPUC alone is replacing about a third of wages lost to the pandemic in the economy, allowing workers to continue putting food on the table and businesses to continue selling goods and services.

The FPUC is currently scheduled to expire on July 31, 2020, abruptly cutting off the majority of income support to unemployed workers, despite rising COVID-19 case levels in many states and ongoing public health measures to try to reduce community spread.

I am requesting that CBO undertake an analysis that would describe the demographic attributes of people who CBO projects will be receiving conventional unemployment insurance benefits in July 2020. In particular, CBO would report about attributes including race and ethnicity, sex, age, and education.

On the basis of information CBO has provided to my staff about what is feasible, I understand that the analysis would exclude recipients of Pandemic Unemployment Assistance because data about them are insufficient. Also because of data limitations, I understand that the analysis by race and ethnicity would use four mutually exclusive categories: Hispanic (regardless of any racial background they have also reported), African American or black, white, and other.

Thank you very much for your assistance. I would appreciate if you could provide this information to my office by July 2, 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard E. Neal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Richard E. Neal
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means